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Spy vs. Spy Saga

For love and money, an FBI misfit becomes a double agent

He was middle-aged, married and misunderstood. She was understanding. They managed furtive meetings, sometimes in her apartment, occasionally at a fast-food café or ill-lit parking lot and, once, during a reckless, heady weekend in San Francisco. Yet theirs was no ordinary tale of frustrated needs and petty betrayals.

Richard Miller, 47, was a 20-year veteran of the FBI whose counterintelligence work gave him easy access to secret documents dealing with the activities of Soviet aliens. Apparently for love and money, he passed a broad sampling to Svetlana Ogorodnikova, 34, a Russian émigré and suspected spy for the Soviet KGB. Last week Miller, Ogorodnikova and her husband Nikolai, 51, were arrested. Miller was the first FBI agent ever charged with espionage, and his case shocked an agency that had prided itself on its professionalism. FBI Director William Webster called it "an aberration on the proud record of patriotic and dedicated service of thousands of agents throughout our history."

Miller was hardly the model Government agent. Grossly overweight (close to 250 lbs.), slovenly and inefficient, he was transferred three years ago from a local office in Riverside, Calif., to the FBI's counterintelligence division in Los Angeles, where he could be kept under closer supervision. His glaring personal problems should have alerted his superiors: on a \$50,000 salary, he supported a wife and eight children, including a deaf son, and maintained a Los Angeles bungalow and an eleven-acre farm in San Diego County. Once suspended for selling Amway household goods out of the trunk of a Government car, Miller was regarded by colleagues as a harmless, pathetic buffoon.

Ogorodnikova was almost as familiar

to the FBI as Miller. She had arrived in the U.S. with her husband in 1973, and the couple clashed conspicuously with their fellow expatriates. "We laughed at them," says Alexander Polovets, publisher of a Russian-language newspaper. Ogorodnikova collected welfare, rented Russian-made films to show in neighborhood theaters, and bragged openly of her high-level Soviet contacts. FBI agents, who interviewed Svetlana often after 1980, welcomed the tidbits she freely offered about her frequent visits to the Soviet consulate in San Francisco, but never considered that the shrill, boastful housewife could actually be a dangerous spy.

Last May, Miller began meeting with Svetlana after work. As their relationship blossomed, he poured out his financial and personal woes. On Aug. 12, Ogorodnikova told Miller that she was a KGB major and asked him to sell her information. Less than a week later, in a Malibu restaurant, he agreed but demanded to meet the paymaster first.

Ogorodnikova led Miller to her apartment and husband, whom she introduced as Nikolai Wolfson, a KGB operative well versed in transactions "on this level." Miller demanded \$50,000 in gold; Wolfson agreed.

A week later, Svetlana and Miller drove her Mercury to San Francisco in order to hand over her reports and messages to the Soviet consulate. Among the items: a 1983 FBI handbook titled *Reporting Guidance: Foreign Intelligence Information*, which contains a detailed picture

of U.S. counterintelligence activities and techniques. Miller had photocopied it in his office. As she dropped Miller off at a restaurant three blocks from the consulate, the Soviet spy asked him for his black leather FBI credential case containing his ID and badge to prove his authenticity to her Soviet contacts. He handed them over and waited patiently at the table for her return.

The FBI belatedly became aware of their liaison a week afterward, put them under full surveillance and bugged her phone. Agents spotted Miller handing his companion a legal-size envelope in a parked car in a darkened lot. Days later they observed him transferring a briefcase from the trunk of her car to his. Wiretaps revealed that Miller had agreed to fly to Vienna with Svetlana on Oct. 9 to meet with a high-level KGB official and that he had already secured his passport, she their tickets. On Sept. 28, Miller was called into the Los Angeles field office, then given lie-detector tests, fired and arrested. A search of his bungalow uncovered an embarrassing array of classified documents, including the original file on Svetlana Ogorodnikova. In her rundown

Hollywood apartment, investigators found a spy kit, complete with microdots and cipher pads.

As the FBI tried to determine the full extent of the security breach, critics inside the agency and out questioned how so unreliable a man could have been assigned to sensitive security work. Says a retired agent on the West Coast: "Why was he on that job, of all jobs? You should bury him working draft dodgers or stolen cars." One theory, which has been raised by many agents but with little substantiation, is that Miller,

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